

The History of the Museum

The Children's Museum of Indianapolis was founded in 1925 through the stewardship and inspiration of Mary Stewart Carey. After visiting the Brooklyn Children's Museum, she was determined to create a museum for the children of Indianapolis. With the help of several civic-minded women and contributions from children in nearby neighborhoods, the first museum collection sprang to life. The initial homes

The museum moved to its current home at 30th and Meridian Streets in 1946. Community activities at the museum increased during the '50s and '60s, bringing greater attendance, more collection contributions, and the need for further expansion.

By 1971, the museum was among the first two dozen museums in the country, and the first in Indianapolis, to be accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. In 1976 it expanded and became the world's largest children's museum at 225,000 square feet, (a designation it proudly holds today at 815,700 square feet). Additions in 1983 included a new restaurant, more storage space, and a new loading dock. In 1984, the museum's collection nearly doubled in size with Frank and Theresa Caplan's gift of more than 50,000 toys and folk art objects from 120 countries around the world.

In 1987, the museum began a series of renovations, including the addition of a 20,000-square-foot atrium entrance and Welcome Center with North America's largest water clock as its centerpiece, SpaceQuest® Planetarium, increased classroom space, and new galleries for changing exhibits.

In 1996, renovation of the science gallery and the addition of the Cinedome™ theater provided yet another opportunity for children to learn in a unique environment.


In 1997, The Children's Museum received an extraordinary \$40 million gift from the estate of Enid Goodrich to help young people share her love of learning. The museum also received the National Medal for Museum and Library Service



of the museum included a carriage house on Indianapolis' Old Northside and the Garfield Park Shelter House.

The museum received additional assistance when The Children's Museum Guild was formed in 1933. This organization of volunteers continues to contribute time, money, and service toward the museum's success. In 1964, the Guild created its first Haunted House, a successful annual fundraising event that still thrives today, more than 50 years later.

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from the Institute for Museum and Library Services in recognition of its commitment to the surrounding neighborhood and the Indianapolis community. In 1998, the museum store, restaurant, and parking facilities were renovated and expanded.

In 2004, the museum transformed the Cinedome™ theater into *Dinosphere: Now You're in Their World®* and added a 293,200-square-foot parking garage. In 2006, *Fireworks of Glass*, a permanent glass sculpture installation designed by artist Dale Chihuly, was unveiled.

In 2007, *The Power of Children: Making a Difference* opened. The exhibit examines the stories of three children—Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges, and Ryan White—who became heroes of the 20th century by overcoming hatred, racism, and fear. The exhibit offers children and families opportunities to discuss difficult topics and learn how today's children can make a difference.

Museum updates in 2009 included the current Welcome Center, the Skywalk over Illinois Street, installation of the brachiosaurs, the creation of Anne Frank Peace Park with its limestone Wonders of the World sculptures, and renovations to infoZone and The Museum Store. It was also the year the museum premiered its *Take Me There®* gallery, which offers an immersive experience of a single world culture. The initial offering was *Take Me There: Egypt*. In 2014, the gallery switched to *Take Me There: China*.

In 2011, the museum opened the \$4.3 million permanent exhibit *National Geographic Treasures of the Earth*, which focuses on archaeology and history at three iconic world sites, and in 2013 the museum unveiled an all-new *Playscape*.

In 2014, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis was again awarded the National Medal for Museum and Library Service—the nation's highest honor for museum service to the community. The museum is one of only a handful of institutions to receive the National Medal twice.

In 2016, the museum opened *Beyond Spaceship Earth*, a 3,626-square-foot exhibit comprising an interactive re-creation of portions of the International Space Station, the Schaefer Planetarium and Space Object Theater, and the Indiana Astronaut Wall of Fame. In August 2016, *Dow AgroSciences ScienceWorks* opened, offering new immersive experiences to feed the curiosity of new generations.

In 2017 the museum debuted The Galleries for American Arts and Popular Culture, featuring the permanent exhibit *American POP* and a gallery for temporary exhibits.

Then in 2018, The Children's Museum unveiled its largest expansion in 40 years—the 7.5-acre *Riley Children's Health Sports Legends Experience*. Featuring 12 outdoor sports experiences and three indoor galleries, it is a new national model for family learning in fitness and health.

Today The Children's Museum of Indianapolis is the world's largest children's museum. It welcomes 1.2 million visitors annually and is one of the Top 20 Most-Visited Museum in North America. It has a combined full- and part-time staff of over 280 employees and houses numerous temporary and permanent exhibits in 13 galleries. The museum offers more than 4,000 programs and activities each year and maintains a collection of more than 130,000 artifacts.